Article 4, Article 7 and Article 10 respectively of the Constitution of the Council.

The Standing Committee of Parliament on External Affairs periodically reviews the functioning of the Ministry of External Affairs and the ICCR. The Standing Committee had set up a special sub-committee to study the functioning of the ICCR and its report was presented to the Lok Sabha on 19th December, 1995 and was also laid in the Rajya Sabha on the same day.

A detailed action taken report on the various recommendations and observations of the Standing Committee had been submitted by the Ministry of External Affairs.

In view of this Government do not propose to set up a Committee to review the functioning of the Council.

Passport Issued in Punjab

1838. SHRI IQBAL SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of passports issued during the year 1996-97 from the various passport offices of the State of Punjab, district-wise; and

(b) the steps being taken by Government to provide passports at the earliest to the applicants of State?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I. K. GUJRAL): (a) The number of passports issued district-wise by Regional Passport Office, Chandigarh during the year 1996-97 is given in the Statement (*see* below). The number of passports issued by Passport Office Jallandhar is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

(b) Several steps have been taken to simplify procedures with a view to issuing passports expeditiously. The major ones are: (a) issue of 20 year validity passport in addition to 10 year validity passports; (b) upgradation of office facilities including computerisation leading to faster screening and processing of applications; (c) simplification of passport and miscellaneous services forms; (d) issue of passports without any further wait for clearance in cases where police verification reports are not received within the prescribed time limit of four weeks; (e) thorough secrutiny of applications at the acceptance stage itself to check their completeness and correctness in all respects; (f) augmentation of staff strength to reduce and clear pendencies; (g) provision to issue passports in cases of emergency/urgency on out of turn basis on the strength of Verification Certificate issued by an authorised official; and (h) expansion of the list of officials authorised to sign verification certificates.

Statement

Number of Passports Issued District-wise by Regional Passport Office, Chandigarh

Rpo., Chandigarh:

	State	Distt.	1996	1997
A.	PUNJAB	BHATINDA	2691	523
		FARIDKOT	2108	389
		FATEHGARH SAHIB	2955	482
		FEROZEPUR	3536	596

State	Distt.	1996	1997
	LUDHIANA	23417	4063
	MANSA	636	98
	MOGA	5974	1217
	MUKTSAR	1059	156
	PATIALA	7643	1087
	ROPAR	7596	1486
	SANGRUR	6242	1182
Total:		63856	11279
B. HARYANA	AMBALA	2634	747
	BHIWANI	503	94
	HISAR	1559	292
	JIND	498	111
	KAITHAL	1370	300
	KARNAL	2295	570
	KURUKSHETRA	3118	528
	MOHINDERAGARH	206	26
	PANCHKULA	2350	395
	PANIPAT	672	245
	REWARI	238	49
	SIRSA	1023	250
	YAMUNMA NAGAR	2088	326
Total:		18554	3933
C. HIMACHAL PRADESH	BILASPUR	193	39
	CHAMBA	79	19
	HAMIRPUR	495	93
	KANGRA	814	258
	KIRNAUR	28	18
	KULLU	115	20
	LAHAUL SPITI	8	4
	MANDI	738	174
	SHIMLA	832	175
	SIRMAUR	222	26
	SOLAN	532	85
	UNA	1455	248
Total:		5511	1158
CHANDIGARH		10482	1500
TOTAL NO. OF PPTS. ISSUED:		98403	17870